

What are the non-negotiables that must be honored if the three Presbyteries proceed with becoming one?

1. Equity and Reasonable Staffing

- Equity of staffing is essential. The workload must be distributed fairly, and staff should not be overburdened. There is a strong consensus that no staff member should lose their job due to the merger, and the responsibilities must be manageable for all staff members. ("Equity of staffing. That it's a reasonable amount of responsibility for staff.")
- The time and attention staff give to different regions or churches must be equitable, not favoring one area over another.

2. All Voices Heard and Respected

- Every church, regardless of size or location, must have its voice heard and respected in every setting. This includes honoring theological differences and ensuring that smaller or rural churches are not marginalized. ("All voices are heard and respected in every setting. Allowing theological differences to continue.")

3. No Loss of Staff Positions

- There is a clear non-negotiable that staff should remain the same, and no staff member should lose their job as a result of the merger. ("They were very adamant that should this take place; staff would remain the same. No staff member would lose his/her job due to this action.")

4. Accessibility and Fairness in Meetings

- Meetings should not always be held in larger cities; there must be reasonable accommodation so that the same groups are not always required to travel long distances. This helps ensure participation from all regions and prevents rural or fringe churches from feeling excluded.

5. Support for Mission and College Ministry

- Continued support for mission presence and college ministry is a non-negotiable for some congregations. ("Support College Ministry. Mission Presence.")

6. Main Office Location

- The main office should remain at Lakeshore Center, as this has been identified as a non-negotiable in at least one session.

7. Regular Re-evaluation

- The new structure must be re-evaluated every five years, regardless of which option is chosen, to ensure it continues to meet the needs of all churches. ("Needs to be re-evaluated every 5 years regardless of what option is chosen.")

8. Faithfulness to Core Values and Governance

- The process and resulting structure must stay true to the Book of Order, the Bible, and the core values of the church. ("Stay true to the Book of Order and the Bible.")
- God's sovereignty and following Jesus must remain central in all decisions.

Example Implementation:

- When planning meetings, rotate locations and offer hybrid (in-person and Zoom) options to ensure accessibility.
- Establish clear guidelines for staff workload and regional support, with regular reviews to ensure equity.
- Create mechanisms for all congregations to provide input and feedback, ensuring diverse theological perspectives are honored.

In summary, the non-negotiables for proceeding with a merger are: equitable and sufficient staffing, respect for all voices and theological diversity, no loss of staff positions, accessible meetings, continued support for mission and college ministry, maintaining the main office at Lakeshore Center, regular re-evaluation, and faithfulness to scripture and church governance.